

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HELSINKI 1117

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FI

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVES TAKE STOCK IN TURKU

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE OFF-YEAR CONVENTION OF THE FINNISH CONSERVATIVE PARTY PRODUCED RENEWED APPEALS FOR COOPERATION WITH THE OTHER MAJOR FINNISH PARTIES THAT WERE LEFT TO ECHO IN THE WIND. THE SO-CALLED "BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENT" WAS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THE PARTY'S YOUNGER MEMBERS AND INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE PARTY LEADERSHIP TO DISOWN RIGHT-WINGERS CRITICAL OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY. THE JUNE 1 AND 2 MEETING IN TURKU PROVIDED STIFF MEDIA COMPETITION FOR FINLAND'S COMMUNISTS MEETING SIMULTANEOUSLY IN HELSINKI (HELSINKI 1113) AND PROJECTED THE IMAGE OF A REFORMIST PARTY, BUT ONE, LIKE THE COMMUNISTS, STILL ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF POLITICAL POWER IN FINLAND.
END SUMMARY.

1. AN IDEA APPROVED AT LAST YEAR'S PARTY CONGRESS, THE "BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENT" IS A NEW FEATURE IN THE CONSERVATIVES' POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTY-WIDE DEBATE IN YEARS BETWEEN THE BIENNIAL CONGRESSES. IT IS NOT A DECISION-MAKING BODY EXCEPT INsofar AS ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ACCEPTED BY THE PARTY EXECUTIVE. ATTENDANCE IS VOLUNTARY AND
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THUS NOT A PROPORTIONAL REFLECTION OF THE VIEWS OF THE PARTY'S

VOTERS. THIS FIRST "PARLIAMENT" WAS HEAVILY ATTENDED BY YOUTH AND STUDENT ELEMENTS. MOST OF THE PARTY'S RIGHT-WING LEADERS WERE ABSENT -- INCLUDING, NOTABLY, MPS TUURE JUNNILA AND RAIMO ILASKIVI.

2. ALTHOUGH IT HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED THAT ANY PARTICIPANT COULD INTRODUCE A RESOLUTION AND HAVE IT VOTED ON BY THE "PARLIAMENT" THE NUMBER RECEIVED WAS SO LARGE THAT THE PARTY EXECUTIVE APPOINTED A COMMITTEE TO MOLD THEM INTO A COMMUNIQUE. THIS GROUP, CHAIRED BY MP PERTTI SALOLAINEN, SOUGHT FORMULATIONS THAT WOULD REFLECT THE CONSENSUS OF THE ENTIRE "PARLIAMENT". THE RESULT WAS A STATEMENT REFLECTING THE HEAVY YOUTH PARTICIPATION BUT ACCEPTABLE TO THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. ACCORDING TO SALOLAINEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LANGUAGE IN THE COMMUNIQUE IS THAT CALLING FOR THE PARTY "TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM ACTIVITIES TENDING TO DIMINISH THE RELIABILITY OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP" AND TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT OF FINLAND'S RELATIONS "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FINNISH-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP PACT, STRENGTHENING THE DOMESTIC POLICY BASE OF THE PAASIKIVI-KEKKONEN LINE, AND THE CHERISHING OF INTERNATIONAL AND PARTICULARLY NORDIC RELATIONS." THE REFERENCE TO NORDIC RELATIONS WAS INTRODUCED TO MOLLIFY THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE YOUTH GROUP'S OVER-EMPHASIS ON IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. USE OF THE PHRASE "STRENGTHENING THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL BASE OF THE PAASIKIVI-KEKKONEN LINE", HOWEVER, MEANS THAT THE PARTY HERETICS ARE PUT ON NOTICE THAT CRITICISM OF THE FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED. WHEN PRESSED TO PREDICT WHERE THIS MIGHT LEAD SALOLAINEN SAID AN OPEN MOVE TO EXPEL REPEATED OFFENDERS COULD MATURE BY THE MAY 1975 PARTY CONGRESS.

3. THERE WERE NO NEW FORMULATIONS IN THE REST OF THE COMMUNIQUE. THE CONSERVATIVES REPEATED THEIR OFFER OF COOPERATION TO THE CENTER PARTY. THEY ALSO -- IN THEIR MAJOR HEADLINE-CATCHING STATEMENT -- STATED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE "ON A GOVERNMENT LEVEL" WITH BOTH THE LEFT PARTIES (COMMUNISTS AS WELL AS SOCIAL DEMOCRATS). THIS WAS NOT REALLY NEWS, HOWEVER, SINCE FORMER CONSERVATIVE CHAIRMAN, JUHA RIHTNIEMI, MADE A SIMILAR STATEMENT TO THE 1969 PARTY CONGRESS, ALTHOUGH ONE SOURCE TOLD US IT WAS TIME THIS POLICY WAS REITERATED. THE PARTY'S CURRENT

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CHAIRMAN, HARRI HOLKERI, SAID IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE "PARLIAMENT" THAT NO SUCH BASIC POLITICAL CHANGES COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT BEFORE NEW ELECTIONS. HE PREDICTED ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT'S REGULAR TERM EXPIRES IN EARLY 1976 AND THE PARTY COULD FACE THEM WITH CONFIDENCE IN VIEW OF THE PARTY'S STRONG SUPPORT IN RECENT POLLS.

4. MP JUHA VIKATMAA, A LEADING MEMBER OF "NEW" CONSERVATIVES,

WAS GIVEN THE TASK OF DEFINING THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL LINE FOR THE "PARLIAMENT". HE SPOKE OF MAKING THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY A "REFORMIST" PARTY DEDICATED TO CHANGING SOCIETY BY CORRECTING ITS DEFECTS. HIS LIST OF REFORMS INCLUDED STEPS TO REDUCE INCOME DISPARITIES AND "CRITICISM ON AN ETHICAL AND HUMANE BASIS OF THE PRIMARY IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO ECONOMIC GROWTH". HE SAID THE PARTY SHOULD DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE TERM "CONSERVATIVE" SINCE IT IS NO LONGER CONSERVATIVE IN THE PRESENT MEANING OF THE TERM. VIKATMAA WAS NOT ADVOCATING A CHANGE IN THE PARTY'S NAME --WHICH MEANS LITERALLY NATIONAL COALITION PARTY -- BUT A CHANGE IN THE VOTERS' PERCEPTION OF WHAT IT STANDS FOR.

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5. DESPITE THE BOWS IN THEIR DIRECTION THE CONSERVATIVE YOUTH ORGANIZATION WAS NOT FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE "PARLIAMENT". THEY CALLED ON THE PARTY LEADERSHIP TO DISOWN THE EXTREME RIGHTISTS, IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT, AND MAKE THE PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY IMAGE PRESENTABLE.

6. COMMENT: FINLAND'S LEADING CARTOONIST YESTERDAY PORTRAYED THE OVERWEIGHT FIGURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY PLACING AN AD IN THE PERSONALS "HIGHLY RESPECTED GENTLEMAN ALONE IN LIFE SEEKS CONTACTS WITH ANYONE AT ALL." THERE HAVE BEEN NO RESPONSES. NOR, AS HOLKERI SAYS, ARE THERE LIKELY TO BE ANY BEFORE NEW ELECTIONS --IF THEN. A MAJOR SHIFT IN ELECTORAL STRENGTH -- RARE IN

FINNISH POLITICS -- COULD RESOLVE THE DILEMMA IN WHICH THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN MIRED IN RECENT YEARS. A SLIGHTLY MORE TANGIBLE HOPE LIES IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A FORMAL SPLIT IN THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY (HELSINKI 1051). WITH THE ANALOGOUS BREAK AWAY OF THE CONSTITUTIONALIST PARTY ON THE RIGHT (HELSINKI 1060) IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE CONSERVATIVES MIGHT BE OFFERED A ROLE IN A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT INCLUDING LIBERAL COMMUNISTS. SUCH COOPERATION, THE CONSERVATIVES STRESS, WOULD BE ON THE BASIS OF AN AGREED GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. THERE IS NO INTENTION OF COMPROMISING BASIC IDEALS AND PRINCIPLES.

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7. ONE NEWSPAPER COMMENTED THAT THE "BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENT" ACTED AS AN EMERGENCY VALVE FOR THE PARTY YOUTH TO LET OFF STEAM. NONETHELESS, THE ABSENCE OF MOST OF THE RIGHT-WING LEADERSHIP WAS STRIKING AND LENDS CREDENCE TO A PRIVATE OBSERVATION THAT THE RIGHT-WING HAS NO LEADERSHIP CAPABLE OF MOUNTING A FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY. INDEED RAIMO ILASKIVI, WHO WAS OUSTED AS PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER LAST FALL, MAY RETIRE FROM ACTIVE POLITICS AT THE NEXT ELECTION. THUS THE "REFORMISTS" MAY WELL CARRY THE DAY AT NEXT YEAR'S CONGRESS, SUCCEED IN SHEDDING THE RIGHT-WINGERS, AND ADVANCE THEIR AIM OF BUILDING THE PARTY INTO THE UNDISPUTED MODERN, NON-SOCIALIST, NON-AGRARIAN POLITICAL FORCE IN THE COUNTRY. IN THIS THEY ARE, OF COURSE, THE RIVALS OF THE CENTER PARTY WHICH HAS LONG-TRIED TO EXPAND INTO THE CITIES FROM ITS PRESENT, LARGELY RURAL, BASE.
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